**Course Description**

The American national creed sees the United States and religious freedom as synonymous and elevates the principled commitment to religious tolerance to a central position in its view of history. Such a triumphant perspective, however, leaves no place for the persistence of religious intolerance that has marked life in the United States since the colonial period. Despite the diversity of individual and groups that have been marginalized at different times, incidents of religious intolerance share much in common. Yet, these instances rarely feature in the glossy textbooks used for the study of Religion in America. Their absence not only distorts American religious history but also leaves us without any explanatory mechanisms to understand the continuity of religious intolerance into the present. How, then, will we have to reconceive the study of religion to develop the tools necessary to account for the reality of religious intolerance in the United States?

Our investigation this semester starts from the assumption that religion is not simply a "thing" out there to be studied but a concept humans use to talk about difference. Like other concepts of difference such as race or gender, we frequently assume these concepts to be obvious and self-evident that we rarely question their realness. On closer look, however, we may come to see that, although these concepts do not define any realities of differences between people, they are politically consequential: We use them to understand ourselves, to articulate differences, and to exert power and influence. Behind these concepts, then, lie relations of power we need to attend to when we study (the idea of) religion. Consequently, our study of religious intolerance this semester will focus on the power implicit in the act of defining religion—particularly in the exclusion of specific religious beliefs, practices, and people from the category of American religion.
Course Objectives

This course will provide the opportunity to:

- explore a range of theoretical tools for critical analysis in the study of religion;
- develop a broad understanding of the analysis of categories of race, gender, and sexualities, and the implications of intersectionality as a methodological approach;
- engage in contemporary debates about the historicization of the concepts of religion and religions;
- apply these tools to an analysis of the history of religion and contemporary culture in America.

Readings


The textbook is available in the campus bookstore. You will be expected to have the assigned readings with you, whether from the textbook or the Canvas files, in class each day. Please include the printing of online documents as part of your book budget.

Canvas Learning Technology

This course will involve using the online communication tools on Canvas as well as readings and documents located there. You would do well to acquaint yourself with the features Canvas offers and different usages and use them as frequent points of entry and exploration around many of the issues we will be discussing as well as in preparation for the assignments.

Course Requirements and Grading

The Final Grade will be calculated as follows:

1. Preparation and Participation 10%
2. Reading Responses 10%
3. Lecture Presentation 10%
4. Midterm Assignment 20%
1. Preparation and Participation (10%)

Preparation: I expect you to keep up with all readings and assignments and to get the notes for missed class sessions from your peers. Appropriate preparation means reading the material several times, making notes, and coming to class with specific questions; part of this preparation should include consultation with recommended readings and standard reference works to understand fully the argument in the text.

Participation: There will be ample opportunity for you to participate in our class. You will be involved in activities such as class discussion, group work with subsequent presentations, and in-class writing assignments. While I will call on you often and ask about the content of assigned readings you are strongly encouraged to ask questions and suggest topics for discussion in class on your own.

Class Discussion: While I will lecture from time to time, the class will be conducted much more on a seminar model of examining your informed responses to the reading material. High-quality participation is key to the overall success of our class discussion. This means I expect you to: raise thoughtful questions, analyze relevant issues, build on others’ ideas, synthesize across readings and discussions, expand the class’ perspective, and appropriately challenge the texts’ and each other’s assumptions and perspectives. We will use a number of different techniques to prepare and conduct class discussion throughout the semester. All place a premium on mastering the content of a reading, evaluating it, and preparing cogent ways to convey your ideas before class. All also rely on public performance and evaluation.

1. **Short oral reports**: In the first unit of the semester we will begin each class session with short oral reports. Reports should cover the highlights or main points of the readings and offer a question for the class. In class, we draw the names of a few students to present their talks that day. The rest of the class and I evaluate the presentations aloud, examining strengths and weaknesses in content and delivery. After presenters and evaluators finish, we will have a whole-class discussion of the readings.

2. **Student discussion leaders**: In the second unit each of you will be responsible to formulate key questions and be prepared to lead the class in a discussion on the day’s readings. We will select discussion leaders during the previous class session to allow time for preparation. Discussion leaders also will meet with me before class to discuss their insights and questions for leading our discussion. At the end of the discussion, the rest of the class will discuss strengths and weaknesses of the leader’s performance. I will usually remain silent for the first minutes to allow free rein to your ideas and then join as a co-discussion leader later.

3. **Round Table Discussions**: The final course unit will address comparative issues in Islam and Politics related to gender and globalization. You will all participate in Round Table Discussions as a team to explore the issues at hand.
2. Reading Responses (10%)

For this class, you are asked to write short analytical responses to the assigned readings (250-300 words). This task is designed to encourage you to keep up with your reading, keep you engaged with the material, enrich class discussion (as you will already have something to say), help you practice your skills in thinking critically and writing fluidly, and, finally, provide a log of your thoughts at this state in your studies. See Canvas for more details.

3. Lecture Presentation (10%)

During the semester we will be discussing a wide range of concepts, events, or people in the history and contemporary Political Islam. Frequently we will benefit from additional information and analysis that goes beyond what our readings offer. Therefore, you will be assigned a particular topic for which to develop expertise through additional out-of-class research. You will be responsible for an eight-to-ten-minute lecture presentation based on your topic in order to deepen the class’ understanding of the subject. Furthermore, everybody will write one peer assessment for another class member’s lecture presentation over the course of the semester. See Canvas for more details.

4. Midterm Assignment

For the midterm assignment, we will together curate an imaginary museum exhibit using primary sources such as texts, pictures correspondence, news articles, census data, and images pertinent to understanding the Nation of Islam. The goal of the exhibit is to engage both the Islamic precedents and the intramovement discourse to humanize and contextualize unfamiliar practices and beliefs and to foreground the role race and other categories of difference played in popular condemnations of the group. See Canvas for more details.

5. Life Story Interview (30%)

You will have the opportunity to conduct a topic-driven interview with a member of a religious community in Metro Atlanta about their experience with religious intolerance. These interviews will add to the growing body of historical knowledge on religious life in the United States through living people’s testimony about their own experiences. A central aim is to understand how American have understood and reacted to religious discrimination and what strategies of resistance they have developed. The interview project has three parts: (1) the interview, (2) a full transcript of the interview, and (3) a narrative analysis of 1,000 to 1,200 words.

6. Social Issue and Advocacy Project (20%)

As citizens and servant leaders we have a responsibility to understand and engage social issues in our communities. The purpose of this project is for you (and your team) to go deeper regarding a specific issue affecting a particular community and to design a community engagement tool/project (e.g., exhibit, film, video, professional power point or poster presentation) that will actively engage others on the issue help bring about involvement and change. You may decide to work on your own or in teams on this assignment. See Canvas for more details and deadlines.
Policies

Attendance

You must be present for class meetings to do well in the course. You should aim to arrive to class meetings a couple minutes early having read the assignment and taken notes, including at least two questions or observations to contribute to discussion. Latecomers will be counted absent at the very beginning of class. Should you be late, you are permitted to enter the classroom only if you do so silently and without disturbing class proceedings. You are **allowed to be absent from a total of three (3) class sessions**. With every additional absence, your final grade for this class will go down 5%. This means you should plan ahead with your allowance of three absences. Talk to me ahead of time if you foresee any difficulties for yourself with this policy. My expectations of professionalism extend to classroom etiquette. This includes such behavior as arriving on time, staying in the classroom until an official break or the end of the class period, and packing up only when class has finished.

Religious Holidays Arrangements

Instructors are encouraged, not required, to accommodate students' academic needs related to religious holidays. Please make every effort to negotiate your religious holiday needs within the first two weeks of the semester; waiting longer may compromise your instructor’s ability to extend satisfactory arrangements. If you need guidance negotiating your needs related to a religious holiday, the College Chaplain, Rev. Lyn Pace, ppace@emory.edu, Candler Hall 202, is willing and available to help. **Please be aware that Rev. Pace is not tasked with excusing students from classes or writing excuses for students to take to their professors.** Emory’s official list of religious holidays may be found at [http://www.religiouslife.emory.edu/faith_traditions/holidays.html](http://www.religiouslife.emory.edu/faith_traditions/holidays.html).

Devices in Class

You may utilize laptops and tablets in their capacity as learning aids during class. You may not use them for communicating, browsing, gaming, doing schoolwork for other courses, or otherwise departing from the task at hand during the brief periods of the week we will spend together. Your phone(s) should be powered down, or in airplane mode, and stowed during class. If you find yourself needing to access the day’s reading on your phone, or are expecting a time-sensitive call, announce it before class begins.

Office Hours and Opportunities for Conferencing about Your Writing

Peer reviews, class discussion, and written feedback that I give you on your assignments are meant to help you reflect on your writing and to enhance your written work through a series of revisions. In addition to these formal procedures, I also encourage you to see me during my office hours for us to reflect together on how to improve your writing. If my office hours conflict with your schedule, I will be happy to make an appointment with you at a more convenient time.

Writing Center (Pierce Hall 117)

The Writing Center usually opens in the third or fourth week of the semester. Consultants in the Oxford Writing Center are available to support Oxford College students as they work on any type of writing assignment and/or text, at any stage of the composing process. Consultants can assist with a range of projects, from traditional papers and presentations to
websites and other multimedia projects. They take a similar approach as they work with students on concerns including idea development, structure, use of sources, grammar, and word choice. They usually do not proofread for students. Instead, they discuss strategies and resources students can use as they write, revise, and edit their own work. All students, monolingual and multilingual, are welcome to visit the Writing Center tutors. Learn more and make an appointment by visiting the WCOnline website of the [Writing Center (Links to an external site.)](http://). Please review tutoring policies before your visit.

Honor Code
The Honor Code applies to all assignments, in and out of the classroom. All work in this course must be entirely your own and entirely original to the requirements of this course in this semester. For more info, visit: [http://oxford.emory.edu/catalog/regulations/honor-code.html](http://) (Links to an external site.).

Accommodating Students with a Disability

- If you have a documented disability and have anticipated barriers related to the format or requirements of this course, or presume having a disability (e.g. mental health, attention, learning, vision, hearing, physical or systemic), and are in need of accommodations for this semester, we encourage you to contact the Office of Accessibility Services (OAS) to learn more about the registration process and steps for requesting accommodations at [oas.oxford@emory.edu](mailto:oas.oxford@emory.edu).
- If you are a student that is currently registered with OAS and have not requested or received a copy of your accommodation notification letter, please notify OAS immediately.
- Students who have accommodations in place are encouraged to coordinate with their professor during the first week of the semester, to communicate specific needs for the course as it relates to approved accommodations.
- Accommodations may not be implemented until the instructor is provided an accommodation letter and discusses the accommodation plan for this course face to face with the OAS student. Accommodations may not be implemented.

For additional information regarding OAS, please visit the website: [http://equityandinclusion.emory.edu/accessLinks to an external site.]

Title IX Reporting
Title IX Reporting: Every Emory employee who is informed about an allegation of sexual misconduct involving any student is required to notify a Title IX Coordinator either directly or through their relevant reporting structure. However, employees who serve in a professional role in which communications are afforded confidential status under the law (e.g., medical providers, therapists, and professional and pastoral counselors) are not bound by this requirement but may, consistent with their ethical and legal obligations, be required to report limited information about incidents without revealing the identities of the individuals involved, to a Title IX Coordinator or Deputy Title IX Coordinator. All members of the Emory community are encouraged to promptly report incidents of sexual harassment and discrimination.

For more information, visit: [http://sexualmisconductresources.emory.edu/policies/index.html](http://sexualmisconductresources.emory.edu/policies/index.html)